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STERN SPEAKS ON PROJECT INTERVIEWING WAR CRIMINALS

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Jessica Stern, fellow at the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health, spoke at the Mershon Center today about her project "Perpetrators of Atrocities," in which she is conducting in-depth interviews with individuals who have been indicted or convicted of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).



Stern is the author of *Denial: A Memoir of Terror*, named a best non-fiction book of 2010 by the *The Washington Post*, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, selected by *The New York Times* as a notable book of the year; *The Ultimate Terrorists*; and numerous articles on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Her visit to the Mershon Center was organized by Mershon affiliate [Peter Shane](#), Jacob E. Davis and Jacob E. Davis II Chair at Moritz College of Law.

The goal of Stern's current study is to learn about the motivations and personal histories of those who are currently standing trial, awaiting appeal, or serving sentences post-conviction by the ICTY. The project is unique in that nobody has ever sought to interview individuals indicted by the ICTY or any other war crimes tribunal on such a large scale, and in a manner that concerns not their alleged crimes, but rather elements of their personal and family histories.

The aim is to identify personal-level risk factors that may have made these people susceptible to recruitment and participation in the conflict. Stern is particularly interested in studying instances of "intergenerational transmission of trauma" and analyzing the long-term impacts of violence not just on these people, but also children and grandchildren.

Besides her position at Harvard, Stern is an advanced academic candidate at Massachusetts Institute of Psychoanalysis and a senior research fellow at the Center on Terrorism at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She was included in *TIME* magazine's series profiling 100 people with bold ideas. She advises a number of government agencies on issues related to terrorism and has taught courses for government officials, and served on President Clinton's National Security Council Staff in 1994–95.

Stern's presentation at the Mershon Center can be viewed as a streaming video in [Windows Media](#) or [RealPlayer](#), or downloaded as a [mobile version](#).

Photo:
Author Jessica Stern takes a question after speaking on "Perpetrators of Atrocities," her project interviewing war criminals from the former Yugoslavia.

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